

October 25, 2004

UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER

DIVERSITY AWARDS PROGRAM

1. Nominations are being accepted for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Diversity Awards Program. This VHA Diversity Advisory Board Awards Program recognizes those VHA facilities and VHA Central Office Program Offices that have advanced the cause of diversity in the workplace and have provided a positive role model for other facilities through an educational initiative, program, and/or activity that demonstrates support for diversity, and empowers employees and/or teams.
2. VHA policy defines diversity as: "those human qualities that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet present in other individuals and groups." Managing diversity is defined as: "a comprehensive managerial process for developing an environment that works for all employees."
3. Any VHA facility, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), or VHA Central Office Program Office that has developed initiatives to increase awareness of diversity and improve diversity within the organization is eligible for this award. Each applicant is to submit an application package which contains detailed information on the Diversity Program, its unique activity, and the involvement of senior leadership. The requirements for the application process are found in Attachment A.
4. Recognition will be given to organization(s) that have developed an innovative, successful program based on achievements in diversity (mentoring, education and training, career advancement, etc.). **NOTE:** *Such programs are not to be confused with required Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Special Emphasis Programs.* The award winner receives the Diversity trophy and the Honorable Mention recipients receive framed certificates.
5. Application packages are screened by a subcommittee of the Diversity Advisory Board. Recipients are chosen on the basis of their application by an ad hoc committee comprised of members who have the background and expertise to serve on the committee. The determination of the winners depends fully on the information provided in the application package. **NOTE:** *The nominated initiative, program, and/or activity needs to demonstrate a commitment to policies and programs that promote diversity in the Federal workplace.*

6. Applications need to address, and are judged on, the following criteria:
- a. Senior leadership's involvement in planning and implementing the initiative, program, and/or activity.
 - b. The extent to which the initiative, program, and/or activity encourages a diverse environment.
 - c. The support the initiative, program, and/or activity provides for employee development and/or recognition.
 - d. The extent to which the diversity initiative, program, and/or activity supports the organization's strategic goals for diversity.
 - e. The initiative, program, and/or activity's established outcome measures with results demonstrated over time.
 - f. The extent to which the initiative, program, and/or activity assists the organization in communicating diversity plans and/or goals throughout the organization.
 - g. The impact of the initiative, program, and/or activity is assessed and used for continuous improvement and feedback on the changes provided to employees.
7. All application materials are to be typewritten, single-spaced and no longer than three pages. Acronyms are to be defined the first time used. Where appropriate, a photograph illustrating the initiative, program, and/or activity may be included. **NOTE:** *The photo may be used in one or more Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and VHA publications.*
8. An original and four copies of each application are due no later than November 26, 2004. Applications received after that date will not be considered. The application package must include a signed endorsement from the facility, VISN, or Program Office Director. The entire application package needs to be forwarded through proper channels to:

Mrs. Dot Brady (10A2A)
Management Support Office
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

NOTE: *Be advised, failure to comply with all requirements will lead to disqualification. The mail to Washington DC area is slow. To expedite and ensure the timely arrival of your package, you might want to use priority mail.*

9. Questions concerning this award program may be directed to Rosalyn L. Cole, Chair, Special Initiatives, VHA Diversity Advisory Board, at 202-273-8963, or by e-mail at Rosalyn.Cole@hq.med.va.gov.

John Perlin, MD, PhD, MSHA, FACP
(Acting) Under Secretary for Health

Attachment

DISTRIBUTION: CO: E-mailed 10/27/04
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ATTACHMENT A

**SAMPLE FORMAT FOR APPLYING TO THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S
DIVERSITY AWARDS PROGRAM**

1. Name and address of the facility, network, or office.
2. Name, title, address, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address for the Point of Contact.
3. Describe the initiative, program and/or activity.
4. Respond to the following award criteria (should be no longer than three pages).
 - a. How is senior leadership involved in planning and implementing the initiative, program and/or activity?
 - b. How does the initiative, program and/or activity encourage a diverse environment?
 - c. How does the initiative, program and/or activity provide support for employee development and/or recognition?
 - d. How does the diversity initiative, program and/or activity support the organization's strategic goal(s) for diversity? **NOTE:** *State the goal(s).*
 - e. What are the initiative, program and/or activity's established outcome measures? **NOTE:** *Provide results that have been demonstrated over time.*
 - f. What role does the initiative, program and/or activity play in assisting the organization in communicating diversity plans and/or goals to employees?
 - g. Describe the impact the initiative, program and/or activity is having on the organization and its employees. How was the impact determined and what process was used to ensure continuous improvement and feedback to the employees on the changes?
 - h. Complete the application package with the signature of the approving management official.
5. Ensure that an original package and four copies of the application are due no later than November 26, 2004, to the attention of:

Mrs. Dot Brady (10A2A)
Management Support Office
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420